



Beth Shalom Weekly Update

Thursday, August 29, 2024 to Wednesday, September 4, 2024
Hazzan Lance H. Tapper, Hon DMus Shabbat Parashat Re'eh

Shabbat Service - August 30, 2024 - 7:30 p.m.

SHABBAT SERVICES

Friday Evening 7:30 pm

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

Erica will work from home
Tuesday - Friday, 10:00a-4:00p.
The Beth Shalom office will now be open by appointment only.
Our office phone and email will continue to be attended to during office hours.

10:00a-4:00p Tuesday-Friday
562.941.8744
bswoffice@verizon.net

Yahrzeit

Steve Baptista
in memory of mother-in-law
Grace Galvin

Kathleen King
in memory of father
Gilbert Gaal

Russ Shane
in memory of grandmother
Norma Aaron Lader

If you know of someone who is ill, had surgery, or just needs a call now and then, please let us know so we can reach out. Thank you.

Selichot

Saturday,
September 28th

6:45p Cheese, Fruit,
and Dessert Reception
7:25p Prelude
7:30p Choral Service

See flyer on page 3.

Please note: during these troubled times, in person services and events will only be open to members, former members and anyone who is known to our Board of Directors. We will continue to have security guards on the premises and reserve the right to inspect any bags or purses. Please do not bring backpacks or anything of that type with you to services. If you do, you will be asked to leave them in your car.

Clergy Schedule

Virtual Services: www.facebook.com/bethshalomofwhittier

**Services and events are once again open to in person. Services will continue to broadcast on Facebook simultaneously for those who cannot attend in person.*

August 30--7:30 pm Service--Rabbi Ken

September 6--7:30 pm Service--Rabbi Ken

September 13--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty

September 20--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty

September 27--7:25 pm Prelude; 7:30 pm Service--Hazzan Lance and Ty

September 28--6:45p Cheese, Fruit, and Dessert Reception (in the Fellowship Hall); 7:25p Prelude; 7:30p Choral Service--Hazzan Lance,

the Beth Shalom Singers, Aryell Cohen--Organist/Choir Master

As the Jew Turns

Torah Portion: Re'eh
Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17
Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 66:1-24

By Rabbi Edward Feinstein, posted on August 21, 2017

Before creating the human being, according to a Midrash, God consulted the angels of heaven. The angel of peace argued, "Don't create him! He will bring war into Your world!" The angel of compassion countered, "He will do kindness, create him!" The angel of justice offered, "Create him! He will do what's right." The angel of truth argued, "He will fill the world with lies, don't create him!" What did God do? God buried truth in the earth and created the Human Being.

There is a fundamental incompatibility between human beings and truth. We don't want truth. We can't tolerate truth -- especially truth about ourselves, our finitude, failures and imitations. We bind ourselves in layers of evasion and self-deception to avoid truth. But once a year, Jewish tradition forces us to unearth the truth and face it. To cut through our culture of evasion, the tradition uses the most powerful psychological solvent available -- it confronts us with our death.

Judaism is a passionately life-affirming culture. To protect a human life, any Jewish ritual is suspended. We say "L'Chaim -- To Life!" over every glass of wine. But on the High Holidays, we actually rehearse death. On Yom Kippur, we deny the body -- fasting (which for Jews is certainly a form of death), abstaining from sexual intimacy, removing our jewelry and finery, our fashionable clothes, our polished, comfortable shoes. We don a kittel -- a death shroud. We literally wear

Beth Shalom Services: We are now open for in person services. If you are not yet comfortable coming to services in person, please tune in virtually by visiting our Facebook page, **Beth Shalom of Whittier**. When there is a livestream taking place, you can click on it and watch.

Directions for viewing livestream services: If you are a current Facebook subscriber, you need only to go to our Facebook page, **Beth Shalom of Whittier**, to view these announcements and videos. If you are not a current Facebook subscriber, you need to go to www.facebook.com and sign up with a username and password and then you can access our page at that point. Always log in 5 minutes ahead of the video start time.

Book Club: On Tuesday, September 17th at 11:00 a.m. We will be reading "The Women". We will continue to meet on Zoom. PLEASE note that we are meeting at a new time.

If you have any questions, please call either Michelle or Myra. Happy Reading.

Simcha Sharing Let the office know of your good news and we will share it in the next weekly. Weddings ★ Births

Tribute Cards To send a Tribute Card, please contact Michelle Hess. Her e-mail is: michelleh3532@gmail.com

PayPal Donations: Paypal donations welcome: bswoffice@verizon.net

Birthday/Anniversary

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what we'll be buried in one day. Why such morbid exercise? To cleanse us. In the face of mortality all the rationalizations, all the excuses, all the defenses fall away, and I am forced to see who and what I really am. The philosopher Franz Rosenzweig taught that on Yom Kippur, the Jew is given the unique opportunity to see life through the eyes of eternity. From the vantage of eternity, what in my life matters? What is real? What is important? What is valuable? And what, from eternity's perspective, are all the obsessions and worries that waste my soul and sap my strength? This is the beginning of *tshuva*, the turning of the Jewish soul.

The Torah reading this week begins with a stunning admonition: *Re'eh! See!* See the truth! See the emergency of your condition. See what you have become. This is a Shabbat dedicated to vision. On this shabbat we will bless the new month of Ellul, the month of introspection and reflection leading up to the High Holidays.

Re'eh! See: We are one. We share a very small planet. We share a common destiny. But all year, I forget this truth and act as if my success can only be bought with your failure. This attitude, "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours," is called by the Talmud, "the morality of Sodom" – the path of oblivion, a form of spiritual death. Sin in the world is what cancer is to a body – one cell going its own way without regard to its place in an organic whole. Unchecked, it destroys the whole. Our lives and our fate cannot be separated.

Re'eh! See: Looking squarely into death, I come to realize what I've done. And so I confess aloud: I have sinned. I have squandered the opportunities of this past year. I have misused the gifts and blessings allotted me. I have failed to reach beyond the needs and desires of the self. I reached downward this year, and not upward.

The great Maimonides taught that we ought to regard ourselves as half-sinful and half-righteous. Our next decision determines our fate. There is a balance between the evil and the good within us. It is a paradox: To see the self as completely evil moves us toward moral despair; it closes the door on the possibility of moral growth. We would give up and retreat into our selfishness. To see the self as completely good is to overlook all the brokenness, and deny all the failures of character. So we maintain a dual vision: We can see the real self in all its flaws. And we can also see the ideal self to which we aspire. Most importantly, our fate is yet undetermined. Our character is yet an open question. We are not stuck. Maimonides vigorously resisted any notion of determinism. We are the accumulation of our choices, he taught, and we therefore stand utterly naked in our responsibility. The first question in the Torah was God's inquiry of the hiding Adam: "Where are you?" And ever since, we have struggled to respond.

A small gloss on Maimonides is offered by Rabbi Mark Borovitz, the great teacher of tshuvah: Imagine this year that you are 51% evil and 49% good. All we ask is a 2% improvement. Just 2% improvement. Can you find 2% more time to devote to family, to community, to the world? Could you afford to give 2% more to charity? Can you become 2% more considerate, kinder? Can you grow in wisdom, but 2% this year? That's all the holiday asks.

"Teach us to number our days," prays the Psalmist, "to get us a heart of wisdom." Ordinarily a morbid thought. But once a year, confronting the truth of our limited days liberates us from the bondage of illusions and excuses, so that we can see the truth of our existence. Perhaps we can change, and begin this new year with renewed strength, with renewed vision, with renewed hope. We'll see.

See Selihot flyer on page 3.

BETH SHALOM OF WHITTIER

INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR



A BEAUTIFULLY HAUNTING SERVICE
IN PREPARATION FOR THE HIGH HOLYDAY SEASON

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2024

at

First Friends

13205 Philadelphia St., Whittier, CA 90601

Cheese, Fruit, and dessert in the Fellowship Hall—6:45 PM

Prelude in the Sanctuary at 7:25 pm

Service Begins at 7:30 pm

OFFICIATING:

Hazzan Lance H Tapper, Hon DMus, Spiritual Leader

The Beth Shalom Singers

Aryell Cohen, Organist/Choir Master

The prelude and service will be simultaneously broadcast
on our Facebook Page: Beth Shalom of Whittier